

INKA CEREMONY FOR

Koen Vermeulen

March 9, 2013, at the Warsaw Zen Center

DHARMA COMBAT

Chon Mun Sunim JDPS: When I was born, my parents gave me the name “Darek.” When I took Buddhist precepts I received another name. And since I became a monk people call me Chon Mun. How do you call me if you don’t use any name?

Vermeulen PSN: I love you!

Question: As from today you will be a teacher in our school. I wonder, what is the taste of your dharma?

Vermeulen PSN: [*Stands up and takes an apple from the altar.*] Please try!

Q: [*Takes a bite.*] Hmm. Good taste! Thank you for your teaching.

Vermeulen PSN: You are welcome.

Zen Master Wu Bong: Your name is Son Ung, which means First Harmony. But I’m not interested in first harmony. What is last harmony?

Vermeulen PSN: You tell me what comes just before last harmony. Then I will tell you what is last harmony.

ZMWB: You are very clever.

Vermeulen PSN: You are my teacher!

DHARMA SPEECH

[*Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.*]

Mountain is water and water is mountain.

This is opposites world. Everything is changing, changing, changing, and suffering is everywhere. You and I cannot make it disappear.

[*Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.*]

No water. No mountain.

This is emptiness world. In emptiness, suffering never appeared. How could it disappear from here?

[*Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.*]

Water is water. Mountain is mountain.

This is truth world. At this point everything is clear. And the truth is only like this: suffering is suffering.

Which world is correct?

KATZ!

The mountain is blue. Water is flowing.

So our teaching is clear: there is opposites world, emp-

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tiness world, truth world and finally function world.

Some years ago, a woman was enjoying a holiday at the beach with her two little children: a nice little girl of three and a boy of five. They had a great time together. That very same day the tsunami hit the coast. At first the mother could hold both of her children. But she was not strong enough. She had to let go one child if she wanted to save at least one of them. She thought that the boy had maybe a little better chance of surviving on his own, so she let go of him, knowing that he actually didn't have any chance at all of surviving. Saving her girl meant killing her little boy. Saving the boy meant killing the little girl. This choice is so cruel: there is simply no solution.

The sun and the moon don't have to make this kind of choice. The sky doesn't have to make this kind of choice. This is our human condition: I think, so therefore I make opposites like life and death. Therefore I suffer. But if there is no I and no self-centered thinking, do you also have opposites and suffering? Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "All questions come back to one point: What am I? Don't know!"

I remember the first time I became interested in this question.

In my mid-twenties I had a hard time. Life was one big struggle. I couldn't sleep at night and I had a lot of doubts about myself. This went on for two years and I was completely exhausted. One evening, I went out for a walk in the fields and I realized I was about to break down. But then, in the midst of all that, I perceived something deep, deep inside. Something where suffering cannot go.

Something that cannot break down. Something that cannot be killed.

If you attain this point completely, then you transcend the world of suffering and you attain peace. However, even if *you* attain peace, this world is still suffering. So, you cannot stop there.

I am very grateful that I could pursue my Zen training under Zen Master Wu Bong and Zen Master Bon Yo as my guiding teachers. Zen Master Bon Shim's teaching was also essential. I found a few points in our teaching tradition that are very useful for my life. I already mentioned don't know. Then there is also try mind and direction. I have a story about that.

A few years ago, an elderly woman came to our Zen center. I told her that our practice is based on don't-know mind. "Oh, I see what you mean. A few years before my husband died, he became sick. He couldn't communicate anymore. So, I had to find another way to communicate. So, I always had to keep don't-know mind to understand his needs." Then she told me a story about how she used don't-know mind in her life. She was standing in the line in a supermarket. There was a man standing behind her with a very big mouth. He was talking loudly about his life as a mercenary in Africa: very vulgar and racist talk. It was clear that he was ready to attack anybody who would go against him. Just like our cigarette man, whatever you would say, he would hit you. People were shocked, and there was a real tension in the air, but nobody dared to say something. Our elderly woman also didn't know what to do, but suddenly, without thinking, she turned around

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and said: “If you want, you can go before me in the line.” This really hit the mind of this man. He got a red face and stammered, “No, no. Thank you. I’m sorry.”

If you clearly perceive the current situation of our world, there is no time to waste. You have a job to do: help this world. One point must be fully clear though. Where will you do it?

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with

the stick.]

If you say you will do it in the suffering world, emptiness world or truth world, this stick will hit you 30 times.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

If you say you will do it in neither of these worlds, this stick will also hit you 30 times.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

If you say you will do it in all of these worlds, this stick will hit you 90 times.

So, where is the correct place to help?

KATZ!

Thank you for coming to this ceremony and listening. ♦

Koen Vermeulen began practicing in the Kwan Um School of Zen in 1992. He participated in a seven-week retreat in 1995 and a three-month Kyol Che in 1998. Koen lives with his wife and two sons below the Brussels Zen Center. In his free time he loves to play piano.

In his current job as Secretary General of the Belgian Buddhist Union he is actively involved in the recognition of Buddhism in Belgium, in prison work and in the development of training programs such as Buddhist philosophy and counseling in the health sector.

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Igor Piniński

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DHARMA COMBAT

Piotrowski PSN: I’m very happy to see you at this place.

Piniński PSN: I’m also very happy too see you, Poep Sa Nim.

Piotrowski PSN: I have a question for you. I think it may be close to your heart. I know that professionally you’re an actor . . .

Piniński PSN: It’s not true.

Piotrowski PSN: OK, but the rumor was that you’re an actor. I know that you have studied acting and it happens that in Zen we often say that Zen means being a good actor. You have been studying acting for so many years,

what does it mean to be a good actor?

Piniński PSN: What are you doing now?

Piotrowski PSN: Sitting and talking with you.

Piniński PSN: Very good actor!

Piotrowski PSN: But what about you?

Piniński PSN: Not enough?

Piotrowski PSN: No.

Piniński PSN: A dog chases a bone.

Piotrowski PSN: *[After a moment of hesitation . . .]* OK.

Schaefer PSN: Dzień dobry! [*“Good day” in Polish.*]

Piniński PSN: Guten Tag! [*“Good day” in German.*]

Schaefer PSN: So, Igor, it looks like you are getting something today and I’m losing something. You are becoming a Poep Sa Nim, and for the last three years I had the title of “baby Poep Sa Nim.” The youngest Poep Sa Nim. That’s what’s going to be your title now. And I will enter a very difficult stage now, called puberty. So I wonder, you are becoming a beautiful, just born, new Poep Sa Nim and you probably need no guidance anymore. How would you help me with my puberty?